



CONEY ISLAND USA

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Coney Island's Not-for-Profit Arts Organization

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ZOE BELOFF – DREAMLAND: THE CONEY ISLAND AMATEUR PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY AND ITS CIRCLE, 1926 – 1972

11 JULY 2009 - 21 MARCH 2010

OPENING RECEPTION: SUNDAY JULY 12TH, 4 – 7 PM

CONEY ISLAND MUSEUM – 1208 SURF AVENUE, CONEY ISLAND, NY

HOURS: Weekends from 12 – 5 year-round, Thursday – Sunday from 12-5 in the summer

<http://www.coneyisland.com/museum.shtml>

In celebration of the centennial of Sigmund Freud's visit to Coney Island in 1909, artist Zoe Beloff has resurrected the forgotten world of the Coney Island Amateur Psychoanalytic Society, along with the visionary ideas of its founder, Albert Grass. Beloff elides the roles of archivist and creator conjuring up Coney Island's hidden history. This exhibition is a result of the Coney Island Museum's new curatorial strategy allowing artists full reign over their permanent collection, encouraging them to explore Coney Island's history in innovative ways.

Dreamland examines the Coney Island Amateur Psychoanalytic Society, whose forward-thinking attitude flourished from 1926 through the early 1970s. The Society's members, most of them working people from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, were filled with the desire to participate in one of the great intellectual movements of the 20th century. The exhibition presents a range of their amateur films, which reveal an incredibly brave, unapologetic exploration of their inner lives.

Albert Grass, the first president of the Society and a quixotic designer of attractions at Steeplechase Park, proposed to rebuild the Dreamland Amusement park according to Freud's theory of dream formation. On view in the exhibition are his sketches and plans as well as a working architectural model consisting of a series of pavilions (The Unconscious, Dream Works, Consciousness, The Censor), linked by a miniature locomotive (The Train of Thought). Presented alongside the Society's films, correspondence, and equipment, Grass's Dreamland exemplifies his group's intention to integrate its intellectual interests into its surroundings, in ways both serious and amusing.

Beloff's artistic interest lies in finding ways to graphically manifest the unconscious processes of the mind. She considers herself a medium, an interface between the living and the dead, the real and the imaginary. The exhibition's depiction of historical artifacts highlights the ambiguity of Beloff's role in its creation. When legendary showman, P.T. Barnum was asked about the veracity of his exhibits, he replied, "That's just the question. Persons who pay their money at the door have the right to form their own opinions after they have gone upstairs." In *Dreamland*, Beloff invites viewers to do the same.

Accompanying the exhibition is a book and DVD published by Christine Burgin and edited by Zoe Beloff, with essays by the museum's director, Aaron Beebe, Zoe Beloff, Norman Klein, and Amy Herzog. Beloff's work has been featured in international exhibitions and screenings; venues include the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Freud Dream Museum in St. Petersburg, and the Pompidou Center in Paris. She recently participated in the 2009 Athens Biennale, and has an upcoming project with MuHKA Museum in Antwerp. Beloff is represented by Bellwether Gallery, New York.

The Coney Island Museum is the only museum in the world dedicated to interpreting and preserving the history of Coney Island, with an ever-expanding collection of memorabilia, antiques, old rides, and relics. This exhibition is funded in part by NYSCA, Experimental Television Center, the CUNY Research Foundation, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Build It Green!, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Independence Community Foundation, the Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation, and private funders. For more information please contact Aaron Beebe at (718) 372-5159 or email info@coneyisland.com

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